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ABSTRACT

Six specific actions in which the university/school district/teacher center triad can promote and enrich the field experiences and student teaching of preservice teachers are suggested: (1) orienting preservice teachers to the teacher center; (2) ensuring that preservice teachers become familiar and experienced in using materials and equipment in the teacher center; (3) using the teacher center as a link between faculty associates, college professors, and preservice teachers; (4) establishing the teacher center as a resource for the clinical professor or university coordinator in regard to statewide functions; (5) making the teacher center a link in the active participation of college faculty in classroom instruction and research; and (6) gaining input from the teacher center in the ongoing planning and evaluation of the preservice program. These actions are described and a data collection system is recommended which will allow the triad to assess the collaborative efforts relative to preservice teacher education. (JD)

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THE TRIAD IN FIELD STUDIES FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS:
UNIVERSITIES, SCHOOL SYSTEMS
AND TEACHER CENTERS

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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THE TRIAD IN FIELD STUDIES FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS:
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Repeated appeals are made for collaboration between the triad of teacher centers, school systems, and universities. Cook (1981) calls for such collaboration which he describes as "working together" or joining in an intellectual effort to improve teacher education.

In the past decade, some states have had extensive university/school system/teacher center collaboration. Krueger (1980) cites Florida's Teacher Education Center legislation in the early 1970s as evidence of such collaboration, stating that the purposes of Florida's teacher centers are to "facilitate collaboration between colleges and universities and school districts, ensure appropriate involvement and participation of teachers and establish procedures for the joint utilization of resources available for preservice and in-service teachers" (p. 83). Much of the focus of the university/school system/teacher center interaction has been with inservice education of teachers. However, of equal importance is the area of preservice teacher education.

Edelfelt and Orwell (1978) stress that teacher centers should be concerned with preservice as well as inservice education. They state that in "teacher centers it is most stimulating for people at different levels of preparation and different career levels to work together in activities" (p. 16). Emphasizing other benefits, they state:

A student teacher or intern who has the opportunity to participate in teacher center activities will have a much broader understanding of curriculum and instruction issues than is possible when working only with a critic teacher.

The teacher center is neutral territory that can be a rich learning laboratory for students in preservice teacher education programs. (p. 16)

Quinn (1976) also stresses the involvement of the triad in preservice education, stating that one item which should be used to judge the extent of collaboration between universities and school districts is the "conceptualization of the role for which the preparatory program is training individuals" (p. 254).

The purpose of this paper is to suggest six specific actions in which the triad can be involved as they seek to promote and enrich the field experiences and student teaching of preservice teachers. These actions include:

- 1) orienting preservice teachers to the teacher center;
- 2) ensuring that preservice teachers become familiar and experienced in using materials and equipment in the teacher center;
- 3) using the teacher center as a link between faculty associates, college professors, and preservice teachers;
- 4) establishing the teacher center as a resource for the clinical professor or university coordinator in regard to statewide functions;
- 5) making the teacher center a link in the active participation of college faculty in classroom instruction and research; and
- 6) gaining input from the teacher center in the ongoing planning and evaluation of the preservice program.

It is believed that collaborative efforts such as the six outlined above and described in the following pages will result not only in improved teacher education graduates but in improved practices in school systems. A data collection system is recommended which will

allow the triad to assess the collaborative efforts relative to preservice teacher education.

Orientation to Teacher Centers

Often preservice teachers do not use the facilities offered by teacher centers because they are unaware that such facilities exist. Field experience coordinators, student teaching coordinators, and supervising teachers must encourage preservice teachers to participate in teacher center activities (Beam, 1981). Invitations should be made to students to accompany supervisors or coordinators to special meetings at the teacher center, allowing the students to see the types of professional development activities available at the center. Such activities enable students to interact with a variety of teachers in an informal atmosphere away from the classroom. Students also become aware that professional development is a continuing process. They see that their supervising teachers continue to attend training sessions as they, too, will continue to engage in the learning process as long as they teach. Preservice teachers need to realize that teacher education continues: it does not stop when they graduate from college.

Supervisors and teacher center directors must ensure that preservice teachers have access to teacher center newsletters and bulletins. Teacher center directors should be invited to speak to groups of preservice students concerning the types of services provided by the teacher center and the schedules for workshops and training sessions. Planning by the university director of field studies and the director of the teacher center can help assure that students are oriented to the teacher center.

Use of Materials and Equipment

Preservice teachers must be encouraged to use the materials and equipment available in the teacher center. University professors should bring their methods classes to the teacher center for a session designed to browse through specified materials and to collect ideas. Assuming that the methods classes have a field component, students can select or make a game or instructional activity for their classrooms, using the resources at the teacher center. The wide array of suggestions and examples of games and activities found in many teacher centers can be a special attraction for inexperienced teachers who are just beginning to build a file of activities in the various curriculum areas.

Resource for Faculty Associates

In most universities, cooperating classroom teachers play a significant role in the preservice education of teachers. Ruchkin (1974) summarizes the belief of many educators that the influence of the cooperating teacher outweighs that of the college coordinator. Recognizing the importance of the classroom teacher, some universities have established the position of "faculty associate" to provide incentives and rewards for the most effective teachers to serve as mentors/teachers/evaluators of preservice teachers. At The University of Tennessee, plans are being made to use only faculty associates to supervise preservice teachers.

Faculty associates must understand not only the policies, procedures, and goals of their school systems but also must understand those of the university preservice teacher education program. Needless to say, this is a complex set of competencies. To achieve levels of

understanding regarding preservice teacher training, faculty associates must have information above and beyond that needed by the classroom teacher who does not supervise field experience students or student teachers.

The teacher center can help link the faculty associate and university faculty members. Being knowledgeable about both the university and the school system, the teacher center can provide information to both groups regarding policies, procedures, and goals. The teacher center should be aware of the various field experiences and student teaching experiences of students. In this way, materials can be housed in the teacher center for use by faculty associates and preservice teachers. Materials relating to time on task, set induction, the directed reading lesson, and other such topics in which the preservice teacher will be expected to have competencies should be available in the teacher center.

The teacher center also can serve as a meeting place for university professors, faculty associates, and preservice teachers as they engage in training activities related to various topics such as those mentioned above. The teacher center director should be involved in these training sessions, assisting with the training and explaining the different materials which are available in the center related to the various topics.

Resource for Clinical Professors

In the State of Tennessee, teacher centers are being used extensively in disseminating statewide information concerning career ladders, teacher evaluation, the Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM), and the Tennessee Comprehensive Education Reform Act. Rapid and

comprehensive changes have occurred in each of these areas in recent months. Teacher centers are involved in these statewide activities primarily because they have taken the initiative in helping teachers secure information about the changes which have been occurring so rapidly that dissemination to all interested parties is difficult. Teacher centers in Tennessee have demonstrated their competency and enthusiasm for providing the state's mandated training for teachers.

As a result, Tennessee teacher centers have become a vital link between educational entities in Tennessee. Colleges of education should take advantage of this unique contribution which teacher centers can provide. Clinical faculty or university coordinators should work with the director of a teacher center to allow preservice teachers to attend some of the statewide training sessions provided by teacher center personnel.

Teacher center personnel also should be asked to participate in preservice teacher education seminars to orient these students to events in the State. These future teachers are then aware of the latest changes in career ladders, curriculum requirements and educational acts. For example, preservice teachers need to know when proficiency testing is required and at what grade levels it must occur. They need to know how such mandates as proficiency testing affect their teaching. Joint training sessions by teacher center staff and university faculty can help students understand the various state-mandated changes and charges.

The university director of field studies and the director of the teacher center should collaborate on workshops, training sessions, or discussion sessions which can be useful to preservice teachers.

Teacher centers, because they do maintain extensive linkages with state department personnel, can provide vital training and information for preservice teachers.

Active Classroom Participation By College Faculty

Beam (1981) notes that the most "noticeable influence on preservice education occurs when university professors work closely with teachers in their own classrooms" (p. 28). These professors "sometimes discover that what they have been teaching at the university to undergraduate students is not always applicable to the reality of the classroom" (p. 28). As these professors work with teachers in inservice education through teacher center activities, they tend to modify their preservice courses.

Edelfelt and Johnson (1984) describe the teacher-clinical professor relationship. The clinical professor serves as a consultant and demonstrator with students in the classroom. As reported by Edelfelt and Johnson (1984), one clinical professor stated that "teachers know what we say works because either they've seen us do it or they've done it themselves with our help" (p. 21).

As the clinical professor, faculty associate, preservice student and teacher center personnel work in training sessions on such topics as set induction, time on task, or directed reading lesson, the clinical professor becomes involved in the actual teaching activities of the classroom. The credibility he/she achieves enhances relationships with teacher center personnel, faculty associates, and preservice teachers.

Planning and Evaluating Preservice Education

Universities and teacher centers should be linked in an integrated effort to revise and adjust preservice teacher education curriculum (Beam, 1981). Relevant field experiences can be planned by a joint council made up of representatives of the triad. Criteria for evaluating student teachers can be developed as well as many other aspects of preservice education.

Teacher centers may also participate in actual curriculum development in preservice education by such activities as making video-tapes in classrooms in order to document exemplary practices. Such tapes should be available not only for use in workshops conducted by the teacher center, but in preservice classes as well (Green and Olson, 1981, p. 58).

Recommendations for Data Collection

Teacher centers serve as an excellent data source in documenting the collaboration of the university, school system, and teacher center. Most teacher centers have a special sign-in form to record activities which occur in the center. It is suggested that a separate sign-in sheet be used for university/school system/teacher center activities. Items related to the six actions listed above should be recorded as members of the triad visit the teacher center. In this way, levels of effort may be evaluated. Recommended changes in the collaborative effort will help to ensure success of the preservice education program for teachers.

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